



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Williamson Medical Center opposes CON for free-standing Emergency Department

FRANKLIN, TENN. – Williamson Medical Center has filed opposition to a certificate of need application by Centennial Medical Center for a free-standing emergency department in Spring Hill. WMC opposes the proposed facility on the grounds of quality of care, cost to patients and interference with patient choice.

“We believe a free-standing emergency department in Spring Hill is not the best alternative to patients,” says Williamson Medical Center CEO Dennis Miller. “Patients will not get a comparable level of quality emergency care they would receive at a hospital-based emergency department.”

The proposed facility, as described in the certificate of need, would lack important capabilities such as on-site access to surgical suites and a cardiac catheterization laboratory. In addition, the current ambulance system in Spring Hill has limited communication capabilities. At Williamson Medical Center, treatment of chest-pain patients begins in the field when paramedics conduct an EKG and transmit results to WMC's Emergency Department. Physicians read the results and determine the best course of treatment, often before the patient even arrives at the Medical Center.

“This type of facility could unintentionally cause delay in the provision of definitive care for acutely ill or injured patients whose outcome is affected by the timeliness of care in the hospital setting, not just timely Emergency Department care,” says Ronald Hagen, M.D., F.A.C.E.P., who serves as medical director of WMC’s Emergency Department. “Such patients would be better served by simply proceeding directly to a hospital-based emergency department or, if necessary, by calling 911 and being transported by EMS to the nearest appropriate facility.”

For low-level emergency care, an emergency department visit can be much more costly for a patient than a visit to an urgent care clinic.

“Many patients with low-level illnesses or injuries could be treated at the proposed facility but would be better served by visiting a less costly, urgent-care clinic,” says Starling Evins, M.D., chief of staff at Williamson Medical Center. “In order to care for patients with high-level acute illnesses or injuries, the facility will have to transfer patients to another facility with advanced capabilities.”

Williamson Medical Center also is concerned that interference with patient choice may occur if patients who need to be admitted to a hospital are transferred to Centennial Medical Center in Nashville. A transfer to Nashville may not be convenient or desired by many patients and their families who live in Spring Hill.

“The CON is not an issue for Spring Hill only,” Miller says. “Other Tennessee hospitals are or will be opposing this application. This is an issue that potentially could impact delivery of quality patient care state-wide.”

The Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency will have a hearing over the certificate of need Wednesday, Sept. 22.

Williamson Medical Center, a 185-bed hospital fully accredited by The Joint Commission, provides comprehensive inpatient and outpatient care including emergency services, with credentialed physicians in 53 specialties and sub-specialties. The community-focused hospital offers a wide range of wellness services, screenings and classes. For more information about Williamson Medical Center, visit www.williamsonmedicalcenter.org.

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